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The Assist

Helping to Improve Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum

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Year 4 Ready to Go!

Dear Readers,

The Winter 2004 MI-Access assessment window (February 16 – March 31) is upon us. District MI-Access Coordinators should have received assessment materials in early- to mid-January and passed them along to schools and assessment administrators.

If you do not have the materials you need to administer the MI-Access assessments, please use the proper communication channels to obtain them. Assessment administrators should contact their School MI-Access Coordinators who, in turn, should contact their District MI-Access Coordinators for assistance. The article on page 2, titled "Notes from the Contractor to MI-Access Coordinators," explains how district coordinators can report missing or order additional materials from the contractor. Remember, only District MI-Access Coordinators can order materials. If you do not know who your coordinator is, consult the "MI-Access Coordinator List" on the Web at www.mi.gov/mi-access.

Also keep in mind that both Phase 1 MI-Access (Participation and Supported Independence) assessments and Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments must be administered during the assessment window.

Materials for both assessments were shipped at the same time and distributed in the same way, so you should have what you need.

Prior to administering the assessments, I strongly encourage you to review the *Winter 2004 Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual*. It walks you through all of the logistical steps you need to take before, during, and after administering the assessments. There are separate sections dedicated specifically to District MI-Access Coordinators, School MI-Access Coordinators, assessment administrators administering Phase 1 MI-Access, and assessment administrators administering Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE. If you do not have time to read the whole manual, please be sure to read the section relevant to your role(s) in MI-Access.

Remember, MI-Access assessment materials for all districts MUST be shipped back to BETA/TASA, the MI-Access operational contractor, no later than April 9, 2004. Any materials postmarked after that date will not be scored. If we all do our parts in making sure that assessment materials are returned in a timely manner,

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If you have ideas, suggestions, or
tips you would like to see included in
The Assist, send them to
mi-access@tasa.com.

NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR TO MI-ACCESS COORDINATORS

Thanks to your enthusiasm and cooperation, we are looking forward to another year of successful MI-Access assessment administration.

MI-Access Assessment Materials

Now that you have received your assessment materials, here are a few helpful hints for organizing them.

- Please verify the preprinted district and school names and state-assigned codes on all of your district and school identification sheets. They reflect the data in the School Code Master at the time the identification sheets were printed, but the information may have changed since then. It is vitally important that the codes on your identification sheets match the current state-assigned codes in the School Code Master. If they do not, it will be extremely difficult to make accurate No Child Left Behind calculations. Therefore, if your preprinted information is no longer current, please follow the directions on the identification sheets for making changes.
- District and School MI-Access Coordinator designations change on a fairly regular basis. If you are no longer a coordinator or are newly assigned to the position, please log onto the MI-Access Online System and update your coordinator information. If you do not have or have forgotten your district's link and password, please e-mail BETA/TASA at mi-access@tasa.com for the information. (No passwords will be provided over the phone.) BETA/TASA will continue sending all MI-Access materials and communications to the District MI-

Access Coordinator listed in the database until changes are made.

- At the district level, use the packing slip secured to the top of the assessment materials box to review your materials and ensure that you have the correct amounts.
- If materials are missing (meaning there is a discrepancy between what the packing slip indicates and the number of materials received), please report this to BETA/TASA immediately either by calling the Toll-free MI-Access Hotline at 1-888-382-4246 or sending an e-mail message to mi-access@tasa.com.
- If you need to order additional materials (meaning you did not receive the number you projected in the teacher and student counts you submitted or you have new students or teachers who were not included in your counts), you can either access an order form through the MI-Access Online System, or use the one at the back of the *Winter 2004 Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual*.
- To help organize materials for the schools in your district, you may want to refer to your original projected counts worksheets or to printed copies of what you submitted into the MI-Access Online System.
- If your district has students in grades 4, 7, 8, or 11 who,

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DISTRICTS TO PARTICIPATE IN PHASE 2.1 MI-ACCESS TRYOUTS

In December the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) sent a letter to Michigan districts asking them to participate in Phase 2.1 MI-Access item tryouts. "Trying out" assessment items, booklets, and other materials is a critical part of the assessment development process. It

- provides students and staff with an opportunity to evaluate newly developed materials,
- enables staff to see firsthand how students react to and perform on the items, and
- provides the MDE with valuable feedback for improving the assessment materials prior to statewide implementation.

In this way, students and staff are able to take a direct and active role in developing valid and reliable assessments.

Tryouts are particularly important for the Phase 2.1 student population because there are no other statewide standard-

ized assessments from which to draw data and information. The MDE and Michigan educators worked collaboratively to develop assessments that they believe will provide students with an opportunity to appropriately demonstrate what they know and are able to do; only data, however, will determine the extent to which the assessments are on target. The tryouts will provide the data needed to ensure that the assessments are, indeed, on the right track.

Specifically, the Department is looking for feedback on

- the length of the assessments,
- the difficulty of the ELA passages,
- the effectiveness of the expressing ideas prompts,
- the range of difficulty of mathematics items,
- the design and clarity of assessment administrator directions,
- the usefulness of the coordinator and assessment administrator manual,

- the effectiveness of other assessment materials, and
- the logistics involved with assessment administration.

Everything that is learned during the tryouts will be reviewed by the Phase 2 Content Advisory Committees, the Sensitivity Review Committee, the National Technical Advisory Committee, and the MDE. Revisions will be incorporated, as appropriate, into the Phase 2.1 MI-Access assessment materials.

The tryout assessment window starts on April 1 and goes through June 4, 2004, giving districts more than two full months to administer the assessments. The MDE appreciates districts' willingness to assess students again in 2004. It would not ask for participation in another assessment if it was not absolutely necessary to ensure valid and reliable assessment tools.

INTERIM PHASE 2 BRIGANCE TRAINING NOW ON LINE

If you have any questions about administering the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments, please view the new Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE Online Training Program at www.mi.gov/mi-access. The program contains ten narrated modules with pictures and graphics that cover everything from how the assessments are designed to how to fill out and return assessment materials.

The use of discrete modules means that assessment administrators and others can view them any time—night or day—and work at their own pace. You can also revisit specific modules as often as necessary until you are ready to administer the assessments.

All together, the modules contain information on

- what MI-Access is,
- why the BRIGANCE® was chosen,
- what materials you will receive,
- how the assessments are designed,
- the question formats that are used, and
- where to go for additional information.

They also explain how to

- prepare for assessment administration,
- record answers,
- assess visually impaired students, and
- return materials.

Before you leave the program, there is an exit survey to complete. Since this is the first attempt by the MI-Access staff to provide online training, we need feedback on your experience. If this method of training proves effective, the MDE will develop additional online opportunities to supplement the annual MI-Access conferences.

Please note that, unlike the conferences, which are geared for MI-Access coordinators, the online training program is designed specifically for assessment administrators. It can, however, be used by coordinators in face-to-face training sessions.

INTERIM PHASE 2 BRIGANCE PERFORMANCE STANDARD SETTING SCHEDULED FOR SPRING

After the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments are administered, scanned, and scored, results will be returned to districts showing how many students Surpassed, Attained, or are Emerging Toward the Performance Standard. What those terms mean and what the performance standards are, have yet to be determined. Those determinations will be made in April 2004 when Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE standard setting takes place.

Prior to setting standards, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) will ask districts, parent organizations, professional education associations, and others to nominate professionals and parents familiar with the student population participating in Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE. The nomination form will be posted on the Web at www.mi.gov/mi-access in late winter. Once the nominations are submitted, the MDE will review them and select a group of qualified individuals from diverse geographic and

demographic backgrounds. Those people will then be convened for two-day standard-setting sessions.

At the sessions, participants will

- listen to presentations on the design and content of the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments;
- see examples of the results reports that will be provided to districts, schools, assessment administrators, and parents;
- break out into sub-panels, each dealing with specific grades and content areas;
- work to better define what Surpass, Attain, or Emerging Toward the Performance Standard mean;
- make and discuss personal judgments about where cut scores should fall (that is, where the lines should be drawn between the minimum number of correct answers needed to Surpass and Attain the performance standard);
- review preliminary impact data from the winter 2004 administra-

tion of the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments; and

- make a final judgment about appropriate cut scores.

At the end of the two-day sessions, BETA/TASA, the MI-Access operational contractor, will take the judgments and calculate descriptive statistics—such as the mean, the medium, and standard errors—for the cut scores recommended for each grade and content-area assessment. These statistics will be presented to the MI-Access National Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for review and recommendations. The MDE will then take the recommendations from the TAC, synthesize them, and make cut score recommendations to the State Board of Education. Once approved by the Board, the cut scores will be used to produce Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE reports for distribution to districts.

NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR TO MI-ACCESS COORDINATORS

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Education Programs, are eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access, they must participate in the Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessments. The Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE assessment materials were shipped along with Phase 1 MI-Access (Participation and Supported Independence) materials in January.

- This year, assessment administrators, schools, and districts have all been asked to return Phase 1 (Participation and Supported Independence) materials and Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE materials in separate envelopes. Please make sure these are properly assembled when you return your assessment materials at the close of the assessment win-

dow. They need to be returned to BETA/TASA by April 9, 2004.

Phase 2.1 Tryouts

For districts taking part in the Spring 2004 MI-Access Phase 2.1 Item Tryout Assessments, your assessment materials will arrive in March 2004. The tryout assessment window runs from April 1 through June 4, 2004.

NCLB FINAL REGULATION ISSUED

In early December, the U.S. Department of Education issued the final regulation regarding the use of alternate assessment scores in calculating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The release of the regulations triggered a great deal of uncertainty about assessing students with disabilities and how their scores count when making No Child Left Behind (NCLB) calculations. This article attempts to clarify some of the key points of the regulation, using information from a summary recently published by the U.S. Department of Education, titled "Title 1 Regulation on Alternate Achievement Standards: Summary of Key Provisions."

Point 1: The final regulation does NOT dictate how individual students must be assessed.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams do not have the authority to determine if a student will be assessed. All students are required by federal law to participate in assessment at the state level.

IEP Teams do, however, have the authority to determine how students should be assessed using the guidelines developed by each state. If the team decides that the general state assessment is inappropriate for its student, it must (1) identify why the state's general assessment is not appropriate for the student, and (2) determine which alternate assessment the student will take.

Point 2: The final regulation does NOT limit the number of students who can participate in alternate assessment.

Since it is up to IEP Teams to determine how students should be assessed, the federal government cannot limit the number of students participating in alternate assessment. The final rule does, however, cap the percent of alternate assessment scores that can be used to calculate AYP. The cap is set at one percent.

Point 3: The one percent cap for AYP purposes applies ONLY to districts and states. Exceptions WILL be allowed.

The one percent cap mentioned in the final regulation applies only to district and state AYP calculations, NOT school calculations. Furthermore, districts and states can apply for an exception to the one percent cap. For example, if a district has a center program that bumps the percent of its students participating in alternate assessment above the one percent cap, the district can make a case to the state, using sound documentation, that an exception should be made. The state then has the flexibility to allow that district to use a higher percentage of its proficient alternate assessment scores in its AYP calculations. Please note that the

Michigan Department of Education will be disseminating criteria for acceptable documentation and developing a process for submitting applications for exceptions. Look for more details in upcoming issues of *The Assist*.

Point 4: The one percent cap applies to special education students taking alternate assessments with alternate achievement standards.

According to the final regulation, states may use alternate achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Each state that uses alternate achievement standards, however, must establish clear and appropriate guidelines for IEP Teams to use when determining which state-level assessment its students will take. Since ALL MI-Access assessments have alternate achievement standards, Michigan must comply with this regulation. Fortunately, we are already well on the way to doing so because (1) our alternate assessments are aligned with the state's content standards, and (2) we have developed guidelines for IEP Teams to use in making assessment decisions. (The guidelines, in draft form, are posted at www.mi.gov/mi-access.)

For a copy of the final NCLB regulation, please go to www.mi.gov/mi-access.

Year 4 Ready to Go!

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the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) will be able to get assessment results back in school districts before the end of the year as required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

If you have any questions related to ordering, receiving, packaging, and/or

returning assessment materials, please e-mail the contractor at mi-access@tasa.com or call them using the Toll-free MI-Access Hotline (1-888-382-4246). If you have questions related to content and/or scheduling, please e-mail me at dutcherp@mi.gov or call me at 517-241-4416.

Thank you for your continued involvement with MI-Access, and good luck.

Peggy Dutcher
Coordinator, State Assessment
for Students with Disabilities
dutcherp@mi.gov

ONLINE SURVEYS: YOUR FEEDBACK IS NEEDED

By February 16, 2004—the start of the MI-Access assessment window—the MI-Access staff will post three online surveys to obtain feedback on different parts of the assessment process. To access the surveys, go to www.mi.gov/mi-access and click on “surveys.”

MI-Access 2003/2004 Training Materials Feedback Survey

Updated training materials are sent to District MI-Access Coordinators in September of each year. District coordinators distribute those materials to School MI-Access Coordinators who, in turn, share them with assessment administrators. District and School MI-Access Coordinators are also responsible for ensuring that those involved with MI-Access participate in an annual facilitated training session.

Each year the MI-Access staff tries to improve the training materials so that coordinators and assessment administrators are better prepared. It makes

improvements based on feedback from the field. If you have comments or suggestions that will help us improve next year’s training materials, please complete the survey.

The reason the training materials survey was not posted earlier is that comments on training typically are more helpful when made in the context of administration. In other words, you can better evaluate the effectiveness of training once you have actually administered the assessments.

Winter 2004 Coordinator Feedback Survey

District and School MI-Access Coordinators have very specific responsibilities they must carry out before, during, and after MI-Access assessments are administered. While there are many logistics involved, the MI-Access staff has tried to streamline the process and provide a number of tools to help. It would be useful to know how the process is working; whether

the tools are, indeed, helpful; and what changes could be made in future years to improve the assessment administration process.

Winter 2004 Online Assessment Administrator Survey

Like MI-Access coordinators, assessment administrators have many forms to use and procedures to follow before, during, and after assessment administration. These forms and procedures can be improved in future years based on feedback received from assessment administrators.

The MI-Access online surveys have proven to be a highly effective tool for obtaining ideas and information from the field. Thank you for completing them and for candidly sharing your thoughts and comments. They all help to make MI-Access a successful assessment program and, ultimately, improve the performance of students with disabilities.

MEAP ELA = READING + WRITING

This fall there was some confusion about whether students with disabilities could take the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) reading assessment, but take an alternate writing assessment (or vice versa). This is NOT an option. Reading and writing are both components of the MEAP ELA assessment. They must both be administered to any student whose Individualized Education Program indicates that he or she should take MEAP in the content area of ELA. Since the reading and writing components of the MEAP ELA assessment are contained in two separate assessment booklets, some people mistakenly believed they were two separate assessments. Again, that is NOT the case.

NO STUDENT PRE-IDENTIFICATION THIS YEAR

If you are administering MI-Access assessments this winter, you will see a number of references to a “Preprinted Student Bar Code Label Pilot Program” in your *Winter 2004 Coordinator and Assessment Administrator Manual* and on your student scan forms. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) was prepared to launch the pilot program this year for MI-Access, but when the MDE decided to establish an Office of Educational Assessment (OEA)—

including both MEAP and MI-Access—the pilot was put on hold. At this time, MI-Access is working with Ed Roeber, Senior Management Executive of the OEA, to (1) determine if the OEA can develop a single system for pre-identifying student scan documents and (2) identify the best source of student information. Look for updates on this topic in future issues of *The Assist*.



PHASE 1 MI-ACCESS UPDATE

In order to comply with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements, all states must indicate whether students are proficient on the English language arts (ELA) and/or mathematics assessments they take. While this is a fairly straightforward task for students taking the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) assessments, it is more difficult for some alternate assessments, such as Phase 1 MI-Access (Participation and Supported Independence), in which academics are imbedded in the context of daily living skills.

Last spring, the MI-Access staff designated specific Phase 1 MI-Access Performance Expectations (PEs) as ELA or mathematics. The table below shows those designations. The first column indicates the content areas that must be assessed in grades 4, 7, 8, and 11. The second column shows the PEs in the MI-

Access Participation assessments that correspond with the NCLB content areas. The third column shows the PEs in the MI-Access Supported Independence assessments that correspond with the NCLB content areas.

Because Phase 1 MI-Access was administered by age for the first few years, the table also indicates which Phase 1 ages correspond with the NCLB grades. If you have ungraded students, use this table and each student's age to determine which grade-level Phase 1 MI-Access assessment he or she should take.

Please note that even though only a few PEs are dedicated as ELA or mathematics PEs, you still must administer EVERY assessment activity in an assessment booklet. You will only use scores from a few of those PEs, however, to calculate Adequate Yearly Progress.

NCLB and Phase 1 MI-Access Correspondence

NCLB Grades and Content Areas	Phase 1 MI-Access Ages* and Performance Expectations (PEs)	
	Participation	Supported Independence
Grade 4 ELA	Age 10 PE-1	Age 10 PE-5
Grade 4 Mathematics	Age 10 PE-2	Age 10 PE-7
Grade 7 ELA	Age 13 PE-3	Age 13 PE-1
Grade 8 Mathematics	Age 14 PE-2	Age 14 PE-7
Grade 11 ELA	Age 17 PE-3 and	Age 17 PE-1 and
	Age 18 PE-4	Age 18 PE-5
Grade 11 Mathematics	Age 17 PE-5 and	Age 17 PE-3 and
	Age 18 PE-2	Age 18 PE-7

*Ages as of December 1st in the school year in which the student is assessed.

GLOSSARY



Phase 2.1 MI-Access Student:

Students with disabilities who (1) have, or function as if they have, mild cognitive impairments; (2) have a limited ability to generalize information across contexts; and (3) have significantly slower learning rates than those of their age-level peers.

Standard Setting: A judgment process using expert judges to determine a specific point on a scale as a frame of reference for interpreting test scores (or "how good is good?").

Cut Score: A specific point on a score scale, such that scores at or above that point are interpreted differently from the scores below that point. (*Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, 1999.)

Item Tryouts: A critical part of the assessment development process when, for the first time, students are administered newly developed assessment items using newly developed assessment materials. The feedback and data generated during tryouts are used to further refine assessments and accompanying materials.

Achievement Levels/

Proficiency Levels: Descriptions of a test taker's competency in a particular area of knowledge or skill, usually defined as ordered categories on a continuum, often labeled from "basic" to "advanced" or "novice" to "expert," that constitute broad ranges for classifying performance. (*Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, 1999.)

Check it out!

You will find more MI-Access information on the Michigan Department of Education web site
www.mi.gov/mde.

The Assist

Important MI-Access Dates

MI-Access 2004 Assessment Window

February 16 - March 31, 2004

Ship MI-Access Assessment Materials to BETA/TASA NO LATER THAN April 9, 2004

Interim Phase 2 BRIGANCE Performance Standard Setting

April 26 - April 28, 2004

W2004 MI-Access Reports to Districts

June 4, 2004 (tentative)

Phase 2.1 MI-Access Tryout Assessment Window

April 1 - June 4, 2004

Ship Phase 2.1 Tryout Materials to BETA/TASA NO LATER THAN June 14, 2004



Bookmark these Web sites:

www.mi.gov/mi-access

(MI-Access Web Page)

www.mi-access.info

(MI-Access Information Center)

www.mi.gov/mde

(MDE Web site)

www.ed.gov/index.jhtml

(U.S. Dept of Education Web site)

www.nochildleftbehind.gov

This newsletter related to the assessment of students with disabilities is distributed to local and intermediate superintendents, directors of special education, MI-Access Coordinators, MEAP Coordinators, SEAC, Special Education monitors, MDE staff, school principals, Parent Advisory Committees, and institutes of higher education. *The Assist* may also be downloaded from the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services section of the MDE Web site: **www.mi.gov/mi-access**.

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